

Message Text

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ORIGIN NEA-03

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY JIDDA

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 221169

FOLLOWING REPEAT TUNIS 6527 SENT ACTION SECSTATE INFO SECDEF
USCINCEUR SEP 13.

QUOTE C O N F I D E N T I A L TUNIS 6527

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, TS

SUBJ: ARMS TRANSFER POLICY, STATUS OF SALE OF VULCAN

REF: A. STATE 207984, DTG 310241Z AUG 77

B. STATE 215916, DTG 091355Z SEP 77 (NOTAL)

C. TUNIS 6447, DTG 091410Z SEP 77 (NOTAL)

1. FOLLOWING AMBASSADOR'S DISCUSSION WITH TUNISIAN FOREIGN
MINISTER (REFTEL C), CHIEF, USLOT MET 13 SEP WITH GENERAL
BALMA, CHIEF OF SECURITY FOR TUNISIAN ARMED FORCES. WE DIS-
CUSSED ARMS TRANSFER POLICY AS WELL AS TUNISIAN INTENTIONS
ON PURCHASE OF VULCAN.

2. WITH COPY OF TALKING PAPER USED IN DISCUSSION BETWEEN
AMBASSADOR AND FOREIGN MINISTER CHATTY, CHUSLOT EXPLAINED TO
GENERAL BALMA OUR ARMS TRANSFER POLICY. BALMA FOUND NO
PROBLEM WITH NEW POLICY AND ASSURED US THAT, FROM THE TUNISIAN
MILITARY'S POINT OF VIEW, WE WOULD CONTINUE TO HAVE THE SAME
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FINE WORKING RELATIONSHIP IN THE FUTURE AS WE HAVE HAD IN
THE PAST.

3. GENERAL BALMA WENT ON TO ASK IF, FOR THOSE POSSIBLE ARMS
ACQUISITIONS ON WHICH MOD HAS ALREADY BEEN GIVEN P & B DATA,
WE COULD NOT ASSUME THAT OFFICIAL CONCURRENCE HAD BEEN RECEIVED.
HE SPECIFICALLY MENTIONED THE TOW MISSILE SYSTEM AND THE

M48A5 TANK CONVERSION AND PURCHASE. P & B DATA FOR THE TOWN WAS FURNISHED ON 10 MAY 1977, P & B DATA FOR THE CONVERSION OF 14 M48A3S TO M48A5S AND FOR THE PURCHASE OF 28 M48A5S WAS FURNISHED ON 18 AUG 1977. JUSTIFICATION FOR TANK PURCHASE WAS FURNISHED BY USLOT ON 29 JULY 77. GENERAL BALMA INDICATED THAT TUNISIA WAS STRONGLY CONSIDERING THE TOWN MISSILE SYSTEM AS THEIR NEXT PRIORITY AND ASKED IF WE COULD GET LATEST P & B DATA ON 18 M-113 MOUNTED TOWS. SINCE P & B ON DISMOUNTED TOWS WAS FURNISHED IN MAY, WE ASSUME WE CAN CONTINUE TO DISCUSS THROUGH USLOT-SECDEF CHANNELS.

4. CHUSLOT ASKED GENERAL BALMA TO GIVE US AN INDICATION OF TUNISIA'S DECISION ON POSSIBLE VULCAN PURCHASE FROM SAUDI ARABIA, PER REFTEL B. BALMA INDICATED THAT FINAL DECISION HAD NOT BEEN MADE, BUT STATED HE SERIOUSLY DOUBTED IF TUNISIA WOULD OPT FOR THE SAUDI VULCAN. HE APPRECIATED GREATLY THE EFFORTS OF GENERAL FISH TO OFFER THE OPTION OF THE SAUDI-PURCHASED VULCAN TO TUNISIA BUT FELT THAT OTHER REQUIREMENTS SUCH AS THE TOW, M48A5S, AND PERHAPS F-5 FIGHTER AIRCRAFT WOULD TAKE HIGHER PRIORITY OVER THE VULCAN. BALMA WAS SORRY HE COULD NOT GIVE US A FINAL DECISION AT THIS TIME. AT ANY RATE, BALMA SAID MOD WOULD LIKE TO KEEP THE OPTION ON THE FORMAL VULCAN LOA OPEN UNTIL THE EXPIRATION DATE, 15 OCTOBER.

5. IN FOLLOW-ON MEETINGS WITH OTHER MOD OFFICIALS, CHUSLOT WAS INFORMED THAT A DECISION MEETING ON FUTURE ARMS PURCHASE
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WILL BE HELD 19 SEPT. AFTER THAT SESSION, THE RECOMMENDATIONS WILL BE TAKEN BEFORE THE COMITE SUPERIEUR DE LA DEFENSE FOR FINAL APPROVAL. WE WOULD THEREFORE HOPE TO HAVE A DEFINITIVE ANSWER ON THE REALIGNED TUNISIAN DEFENSE PRIORITIES BY THE FIRST WEEK OF OCTOBER.

6. FYI, GENERAL BALMA INDICATED THAT AMBASSADOR HEDDA WAS IN TUNIS THIS WEEK FOR AN UPDATE ON TUNISIA'S DEFENSE REQUIREMENTS AND WAS NOW FULLY ABREAST OF MOD'S THINKING.
MULCAHY UNQUOTE VANCE

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